

What is claimed is:

1. A method for managing merchandise owned by a consumer, comprising:

5 receiving designation of merchandise owned by the consumer through a network; and

managing information relating to the merchandise owned by the consumer based on the designation.

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2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising

15 automatically designating purchased merchandise as the merchandise owned by the consumer, and managing information about the purchased merchandise when the consumer purchases the merchandise through the network.

20 3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

receiving designation of unnecessary merchandise through the network; and

releasing designation of merchandise as owned by the consumer for the unnecessary merchandise.

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4. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

determining whether or not the consumer has already owned ordered merchandise according to information about the merchandise owned by the consumer when an order for merchandise is received from the consumer through the network; and

transmitting a determination result to the consumer through the network when it is determined that the consumer has already owned the ordered merchandise.

5. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

receiving designation of merchandise not owned but ever used by the consumer through the network; and

managing information about merchandise ever used by the consumer.

6. A method for outputting a retrieval result after retrieving merchandise to a terminal of a consumer, comprising:

managing information about merchandise owned by the consumer; and

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5        7.        The method according to claim 1, further  
comprising:

10 transmitting information about merchandise to  
be recommended to the consumer through the network.

15 transmitting information about the merchandise  
to be recommended and also input by another  
consumer when the recommendation is performed.

classifying each piece of merchandise based on an attribute which is information indicating a tendency of taste; and

determining an attribute matching the taste of  
25 the consumer according to information about

5      10.    The method according to claim 7, further  
comprising:

11. The method according to claim 7, further comprising:

transmitting information about the extracted  
second piece of merchandise to the consumer.

12. The method according to claim 7, further  
25 comprising:

when the recommendation is performed,  
 classifying each piece of merchandise based on  
 an attribute which is information indicating a  
 tendency of taste;

5           determining an attribute matching a taste of  
 the consumer according to information about  
 merchandise owned by the consumer;

          extracting merchandise which is likely to be  
 owned together with merchandise classified into the  
 10       determined attribute, and is classified into an  
 attribute other than the determined attribute  
 according to information about merchandise owned by  
 the consumer and another consumer; and

          transmitting information about an attribute to  
 15       which the extracted merchandise is classified to  
 the consumer.

13.    The method according to claim 7, wherein:  
           said merchandise is a copyrighted article; and  
 20        said attribute is an author name.

14.    The method according to claim 1, further  
 comprising:

          receiving information designating unnecessary  
 25        merchandise from a plurality of consumers;

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presenting a collection result to a buyer.

receiving information designating the  
10 unnecessary merchandise from the consumer through  
the network; and

16. A method for providing information about merchandise to a consumer through a network, comprising:

transmitting information indicating a location  
of the collected document in the network to the  
25 consumer together with the information about the

merchandise.

17. The method according to claim 16, further comprising in collecting the document:

5           setting a positive sample document group about given merchandise, and a negative sample document group about merchandise not much related to the given merchandise;

10           determining a document to be collected based on a reference of the positive sample document group and the negative sample document group; and

          collecting a document to be collected from the network.

15   18. A method for managing owned merchandise, comprising:

          transmitting information designating the owned merchandise to a server connected through a network; and

20           receiving the information about the owned merchandise based on the transmitted information from the server.

25   19. A storage medium storing a program used to direct a computer to control management of

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receiving designation of merchandise owned by  
the consumer through a network;

5           managing information relating to the  
merchandise owned by the consumer based on the  
designation; and

transmitting the information about the owned  
merchandise to the consumer through the network.

20. A storage medium storing a program used to direct a computer to collect unnecessary merchandise while delivering merchandise to a consumer through a network and perform a process comprising:

determining to collect the designated  
unnecessary merchandise when the consumer has  
ordered another piece of merchandise and the other  
piece of merchandise is delivered to the consumer.

21. A merchandise management apparatus which  
25 manages merchandise owned by a consumer,





unnecessary merchandise from the consumer through the network; and

determining to collect the designated unnecessary merchandise when the consumer has  
5 ordered another piece of merchandise and the other piece of merchandise is delivered to the consumer.

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